

REMARKS:

Status Of Claims

Claim 1 has been amended and claims 17-20 have been added to more clearly distinguish the present invention from the prior art. Thus claims 1-20 are currently pending in the application with claims 1, 17, and 20 being independent.

Office Action

In the office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-16 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Stickney U.S. Patent No. 6,043,813. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Claim 1 recites “receiving into a computer system an incident report directly from a witness”, “prompting the witness to provide certain types of information about the incident”, and “selecting an authority to whom the incident report should be sent, wherein the authority is selected based at least in part on information provided by the witness”.

Stickney states, in column 3 lines 58-61, “Seated in front of the interrogation recording tool 10 is an operator 12 who is entering information from statements by a witness 14 into the interrogation recording tool”. Stickney also states, in column 4 lines 1-3, “As the witness 14 gives testimony, the operator 12 encodes objects and their geometric relationships as they are being described”. This is because the Stickney tool uses “a command library” to encode objects and relationships. The operator is required to be familiar with the command library, since, as stated in column 4 lines 59-62, “Valid commands received by the command interpreter 42 must be found in a command library 44 which is a library of all of the functions that can be performed”. This familiarity could not be expected of the witness. Therefore, the witness would not be able to enter information into the tool.

In contrast, the present invention does not require a command library nor an operator familiar with the command library. Instead, the witness sends information to the computer system directly, without assistance from the operator.

Additionally, the Stickney tool is, as stated in column 2 lines 56-62, “adapted to respond to statements made by a witness during a legal proceeding, such as testimony taken by a witness in court or in a deposition. That is, the [Stickney] invention is a tool which permits rapid recording and visualization of witness testimony describing the state of affairs and behavior of object and events”. While it is possible to use the Stickney tool in another manner, it is not shown to reside on a network being able to communicate with more than one authority. Indeed, the authority has already been selected long before the Stickney tool can be used. Therefore, not only does Stickney not teach of selecting an authority, Stickney actually teaches away from there being more than one authority.

Regarding claims 7 and 8, the Examiner acknowledges that Stickney does not disclose the authority being automatically selected by the computer system. Further, the Examiner has taken official notice that doing so is well known in the art. Applicant respectfully traverses this official notice and requests proof of the official notice. As discussed above, Stickney’s tool is not concerned with selecting an authority. Current methods involve a witness selecting an authority before filing an incident report and filing that report directly with the selected authority.

In contrast, the present invention allows a witness to file an incident report first. Then, based on the information supplied in the report, an appropriate authority is selected. The appropriate authority may be automatically selected by the computer system, where the witness may or may not be allowed to approve such a selection. Furthermore, where the witness selects the appropriate authority without assistance from the computer system, the witness is in a better position to select the appropriate authority with the report prepared and all known facts laid out.

Regarding claims 9 and 10, the Examiner acknowledges that Stickney does not disclose receiving into the computer system an action report from the authority explaining the action the authority took. Further, the Examiner has taken official notice that doing so is well known in the art. Applicant respectfully traverses this official notice and requests proof of the official notice. Current methods require that an authority directly contact a witness in order to inform them of any action taken. Alternatively, a witness may learn of an action taken by an authority through limited statements issued to news agencies.

Regarding claim 11, the Examiner mistakenly states that Stickney incident reports are received from a plurality of different witnesses, as shown in Figure 1. Column 3 lines 55-63 describe a plurality of people as, an operator 12, a single witness 14, a plaintiff's lawyer 20, a defendant's lawyer 22, and a court reporter 24. Clearly, no more than the single witness is disclosed and therefore Stickney does not teach incident reports being received from a plurality of different witnesses.

Regarding claims 12-14, the Examiner acknowledges that Stickney does not disclose storing incident reports in a searchable database where other people can access and add to them. Further, the Examiner has taken official notice that doing so is well known in the art. Applicant respectfully traverses this official notice and requests proof of the official notice. Claims 12-14 recite "storing the incident reports in a searchable database", "permitting persons to access the searchable database", and "receiving additional information from the persons that access the searchable database", respectively. As disclosed beginning on page 8 line 31, "this results in a more complete description of the incident because the information entered by one witness may refresh the memory of another, and vice versa, thus resulting in more accurate and complete incident reports". Stickney, in fact, teaches away from this philosophy by limiting input to only one

witness, as discussed above, and highlighting inconsistencies "to attack the credibility of a witness' statements".

Claims 2-16 depend directly or indirectly from independent claim 1, which is in a condition to be allowed, and are therefore also allowable.

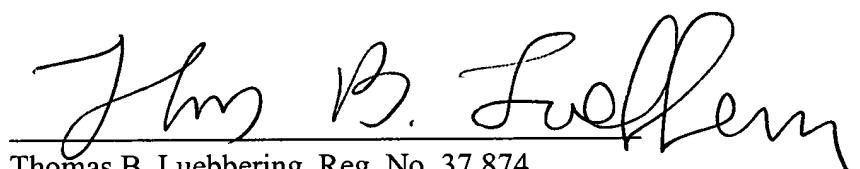
Any additional fee which is due in connection with this amendment should be applied against our Deposit Account No. 19-0522.

In view of the foregoing, a Notice of Allowance appears to be in order and such is courteously solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Paragraph beginning at line 18 of page 4.

The computer program operating the central computer 10 next prompts the witness to fill out a complete incident report so that the central computer can process the report as depicted in step 102. For example, the program preferably prompts the witness to enter the time and date the incident occurred, a full description of the incident, several key words that best describe the incident such as "robbery", "speeding violation", or "bad service", the exact or general location of the incident, and an indication of whether physical or financial harm was done to the witness or others. The program may also prompt the witness to identify which law or rule the witness believes was violated as a result of the incident, or the program may automatically identify which law or rule was violated based on the other information entered by the witness or from other information such as information from past incident reports or even data that is collected independently by the system such as by video surveillance equipment.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claim 1 as follows:

1.(Amended)A computer-based method of collecting and processing incidents observed by witnesses comprising the steps of:
receiving into a computer system an incident report directly from a witness who
observed an incident committed by an offender;
prompting the witness to provide certain types of information about the incident;

selecting an authority to whom the incident report should be sent, wherein the authority is selected based at least in part on information entered by the witness; and

sending the incident report to the selected authority so that the authority can respond to the incident report.